

Message Text

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ACTION INR-07

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CONFIDENTIAL COLOMBO 2572

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINR, BG

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH BANGLADESHI HIGH COMMISSIONER

REF: DEPARTMENT A-3152

1. SUMMARY: FIRST BANGLADESHI HIGH COMMISSIONER TO SRI LANKA, ABDUL HAKIM, CALLED ON AMBASSADOR REED JULY 15. HAKIM IS OBVIOUSLY ANTI-INDIAN, NO SUPPORTER OF SHEIK MUJIBUR RAHMAN AND CONSIDERS HIMSELF A CLOSE FRIEND OF PRESIDENT SAYEM. HE FEELS INDIA IS EXPLOITING BANGLADESH AND SAID BENGALI DELEGATION TO NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT IS CONSIDERING RASIING GANGES WEATERS/FARAKKA BARRAGE ISSUE AT SUMMIT. HAKIM WAS CRITICAL OF THOSE WHO ATTACK DIEGO GARCIA BUT REMAINED SILENT ON INDIAN AND SOVIET MILITARY ACTIVITIES. HE ALSO SAID BANGLADESH SUPPORTS U.S. APPROACH TO KOREA ISSUE BUT WOULD NOT TAKE LEAD ON IT. END SUMMARY.

2. BANGLADESH'S FIRST HIGH COMMISSIONER TO SRI LANKA, MR. JUSTICE (AS HE LIKES TO BE CALLED) ABDUL HAKIM CALLED ON AMBASSADOR REED JULY 15. HE WAS VERY FRIENDLY, LAVISH IN HIS PRAISE FOR THAT THE U.S. HAS DONE FOR BANGLADESH AND SAID HIS PEOPLE RECOGNIZE THAT THE AMERICANS ARE THEIR TRUE FRIENDS. HAKIM WHO SAID HE IS 56 YEARS OLD, IS ALSO CONFIDENTIAL

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PROUD OF THE FACT THAT PRESIDENT SAYEM IS A FORMER JUSTICE

AND, ACCORDING TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER, A CLOSE FRIEND OF HIS.

3. HAKIM WAS OPEN AND FRANK IN RECOUNTING HIS VIEW OF WHAT PRECIPITATED THE CREATION OF BANGLADESH AND ITS HISTORY SINCE WINNING INDEPENDENCE. HE CLAIMED THE INTELLIGENT, WELL INFORMED PEOPLE OF EAST PAKISTAN DID NOT WANT THIS TO HAPPEN. ACCORDING TO HIM, THE REVOLT WAS INITIATED BY A GROUP OF DISSIDENTS WHO CONVINCED THE POPULATION THEY WERE BEING TREATED AS SECOND CLASS CITIZENS. INDIA CAME TO THE BENGALIS' AID POSING AS A FRIEND. WHEN BANGLADESH EMERGED AS AN INDEPENDENT NATION UNDER SHEIK MUJIBUR RAHMAN'S LEADERSHIP IT SOON BECAME APPARENT THAT CONDITIONS WERE DETERIORATING. IN THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S VIEW, SHEIK MUJIB WAS IN EFFECT A PUPPET FOR INDIA AND HE AND HIS ASSOCIATES WERE USING THEIR POSITIONS FOR PERSONAL GAINR AND WERE NOT CONCERNED FOR THE PLIGHT OF THE PEOPLE. THE SITUATION REACHED THE POINT WHERE MUJIB WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF FAVOR. CONSEQUENTLY, HE AND HIS FAMILY WERE ASSASSINATED, AN OCCURENCE WHICH HAKIM INDICATED HE DID NOT PERSONALLY APPROVE OF BUT WHICH WAS INDICATIVE OF MUJIB'S PUBLIC DISFAVOR. HAKIM SAID: "WE HAVE HONEST, EFFECTIVE, LEADERSHIP NOW AND, GIVEN TIME AND SUFFICIENT AID, WE WILL DEVELOP INTO A Viable NATION."

4. ON INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS, THE HIGH COMMISSIONER DESCRIBED THEM AS "STRAINED." HE CLAIMED THAT WHEN THE PRESENT REGIME ASSUMED POWER, SHEIK MUJIB'S FOLLOWERS FLED TO INDIA. THERE THEY HAVE BEEN GIVEN INSURRECTION TRAINING BY THE INDIANS AND ARE NOW COMING BACK TO BANGLADESH TO CONDUCT SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES. HAKIM ALSO CHARGED THAT INDIA IS EXPLOITING BANGLADESH GIVING THE FARAKKA BARRAGE ISSUE AS AN EXAMPLE. HAKIM SAID THE INDIAN HOLD BACK THE GANGES WATER DURING THE DRY SEASON CAUSING IMMENSE DAMMAGE TO CROPS AND LIVESTOCK AND THEN RELEASE HUGE QUANTITIES OF WATER IN PERIODS OF EXCESS RAIN CAUSING CATASTROPHIC FLOODS. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER SAID THAT IN BANGLADESH'S PRESENT WEAKENED POSITION IT FINDS ITSELF VIRTUALLY HELPLESS TO DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM. HOWEVER, THE BANGLADESH DELEGATION TO THE AUGUST NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT IS CONSIDERING RAISING THE

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GANGES WATER ISSUE AT THE CONFERENCE AS IT IS CONSIDERED A MATTER OF "LIFE AND DEATH" IMPORTANCE.

5. SUBJECTS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THE KOREAN ISSUE ALSO CAME UP. ON THE INDIAN OCEAN, HAKIM WAS CRITICAL OF COUNTRIES WHO CRITICIZE THE U.S. INSTALLATION ON DIEGO GARCIA BUT REMAIN SILENT ABOUT THE FACILITIES OF THE U.S.S.R. AND INDIA. IN FACT, AT A PRESS CONFERENCE

SHORTELY AFTER HIS ARRIVAL IN COLOMBO, HE HAD SPOKEN ABOUT DIEGO GARCIA SAYING THERE ARE MANY "SECRET DIEGO GARCIAS" IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. HE WAS PRESUMABLY REFERRING TO SOVIET AND INDIAN MILITARY ACTIVITIES. REGARDING KOREA, HAKIM CLAIMED BANGLADESH AGREED WITH THE U.S. POSITION AND WOULD SUPPORT OUR APPROACH TO THE ISSUE. HE DID NOT, HOWEVER, FEEL BANGLADESH COULD TAKE THE LEAD IN DEBATE BUT FELT MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA MIGHT TAKE THE INITIATIVE. HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT EGYPT MIGHT BE APPROACHED TO SEE IF THE EGYPTIANS WOULD SPEAK OUT ON THE ISSUE.

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